

part of the burden of the aftermath is in its own interest.

Accomplishing all of this in less than six months is probably unrealistic. The political decision should be made, and the target date set, now.

THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISTS

Despite President Bush's repeated claims, Al Qaeda had no significant foothold in Iraq before the invasion, which gave it new base camps, new recruits and new prestige.

This war diverted Pentagon resources from Afghanistan, where the military had a real chance to hunt down Al Qaeda's leaders. It alienated essential allies in the war against terrorism. It drained the strength and readiness of American troops.

And it created a new front where the United States will have to continue to battle terrorist forces and enlist local allies who reject the idea of an Iraq hijacked by international terrorists. The military will need resources and bases to stanch this self-inflicted wound for the foreseeable future.

THE QUESTION OF BASES

The United States could strike an agreement with the Kurds to create those bases in northeastern Iraq. Or, the Pentagon could use its bases in countries like Kuwait and Qatar, and its large naval presence in the Persian Gulf, as staging points.

There are arguments for, and against, both options. Leaving troops in Iraq might make it too easy—and too tempting—to get drawn back into the civil war and confirm suspicions that Washington's real goal was to secure permanent bases in Iraq. Mounting attacks from other countries could endanger those nations' governments.

The White House should make this choice after consultation with Congress and the other countries in the region, whose opinions the Bush administration has essentially ignored. The bottom line: the Pentagon needs enough force to stage effective raids and airstrikes against terrorist forces in Iraq, but not enough to resume large-scale combat.

THE CIVIL WAR

One of Mr. Bush's arguments against withdrawal is that it would lead to civil war. That war is raging, right now, and it may take years to burn out. Iraq may fragment into separate Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite republics, and American troops are not going to stop that from happening.

It is possible, we suppose, that announcing a firm withdrawal date might finally focus Iraq's political leaders and neighboring governments on reality. Ideally, it could spur Iraqi politicians to take the steps toward national reconciliation that they have endlessly discussed but refused to act on.

But it is foolish to count on that, as some Democratic proponents of withdrawal have done. The administration should use whatever leverage it gains from withdrawing to press its allies and Iraq's neighbors to help achieve a negotiated solution.

Iraq's leaders—knowing that they can no longer rely on the Americans to guarantee their survival—might be more open to compromise, perhaps to a Bosnian-style partition, with economic resources fairly shared but with millions of Iraqis forced to relocate. That would be better than the slow-motion ethnic and religious cleansing that has contributed to driving one in seven Iraqis from their homes.

The United States military cannot solve the problem. Congress and the White House must lead an international attempt at a negotiated outcome. To start, Washington must turn to the United Nations, which Mr. Bush spurned and ridiculed as a preface to war.

THE HUMAN CRISIS

There are already nearly two million Iraqi refugees, mostly in Syria and Jordan, and

nearly two million more Iraqis who have been displaced within their country. Without the active cooperation of all six countries bordering Iraq—Turkey, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria—and the help of other nations, this disaster could get worse. Beyond the suffering, massive flows of refugees—some with ethnic and political resentments—could spread Iraq's conflict far beyond Iraq's borders.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia must share the burden of hosting refugees. Jordan and Syria, now nearly overwhelmed with refugees, need more international help. That, of course, means money. The nations of Europe and Asia have a stake and should contribute. The United States will have to pay a large share of the costs, but should also lead international efforts, perhaps a donors' conference, to raise money for the refugee crisis.

Washington also has to mend fences with allies. There are new governments in Britain, France and Germany that did not participate in the fight over starting this war and are eager to get beyond it. But that will still require a measure of humility and a commitment to multilateral action that this administration has never shown. And, however angry they were with President Bush for creating this mess, those nations should see that they cannot walk away from the consequences. To put it baldly, terrorism and oil make it impossible to ignore.

The United States has the greatest responsibilities, including the admission of many more refugees for permanent resettlement. The most compelling obligation is to the tens of thousands of Iraqis of courage and good will—translators, embassy employees, reconstruction workers—whose lives will be in danger because they believed the promises and cooperated with the Americans.

THE NEIGHBORS

One of the trickiest tasks will be avoiding excessive meddling in Iraq by its neighbors—America's friends as well as its adversaries.

Just as Iran should come under international pressure to allow Shiites in southern Iraq to develop their own independent future, Washington must help persuade Sunni powers like Syria not to intervene on behalf of Sunni Iraqis. Turkey must be kept from sending troops into Kurdish territories.

For this effort to have any remote chance, Mr. Bush must drop his resistance to talking with both Iran and Syria. Britain, France, Russia, China and other nations with influence have a responsibility to help. Civil war in Iraq is a threat to everyone, especially if it spills across Iraq's borders.

President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney have used demagoguery and fear to quell Americans' demands for an end to this war. They say withdrawing will create bloodshed and chaos and encourage terrorists. Actually, all of that has already happened—the result of this unnecessary invasion and the incompetent management of this war.

This country faces a choice. We can go on allowing Mr. Bush to drag out this war without end or purpose. Or we can insist that American troops are withdrawn as quickly and safely as we can manage—with as much effort as possible to stop the chaos from spreading.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Michigan (Mr. McCOTTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. McCOTTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BRING OUR TROOPS HOME FROM IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, we are back from our Fourth of July district work period, but our homecoming has not been a particularly happy one because we have received even more bad news from the occupation in Iraq.

Yesterday the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service reported that the cost of the occupation has soared to \$10 billion a month, which will add up to half a trillion dollars, thanks to the administration's decision to send more troops and escalate the occupation.

Ten billion dollars a month. I pulled out my calculator. I did some division and found that \$10 billion translates into \$23 million per month per congressional district. Yes, the President is sending a bill to our constituents in every district every month that says you owe \$24 million and you had better pay up because if you don't, I will borrow the money and stick your children and your grandchildren with the bill plus plenty of interest. And I am going to send you another bill just like this one every single month from here on.

Now, some people call the spending on the war the "burn rate." But America doesn't have money to burn. Not when we have critically important investments to make in places that really make a difference for our country, like education; health care; the environment; energy independence; and homeland security, including better security at our ports, at our airports and giving first responders the tools they need to keep our communities safe.

And here is what disturbs me the very most about this burn rate: while the administration throws good money after bad in Iraq, it wants to roll back health coverage for kids right here in America. Those are the wrong priorities. They are the wrong values.

Let's ask ourselves what are we getting for our \$10 billion a month. We are getting an Iraq Government that isn't meeting any of the benchmarks. We are contributing to a refugee crisis that has already forced at least 4 million Iraqis out of their homes with tens of thousands leaving every month. And we are stretching our military to the breaking point.

Today, the Army announced that in June it missed its recruitment goal for the second month in a row. It appears that parents, alarmed about the bloodshed and never-ending nature of this occupation, are discouraging their children from signing up. Isn't it ironic that our involvement in Iraq is turning